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ABSTRACT

This report presents the Prichard Committee recommendations on professional development of Kentucky teachers. They are based on the results of a steering committee of Kentucky educators and are being implemented in a Pew Charitable Trusts project. The overall finding was that for school reform to succeed in Kentucky, greatly enhanced professional development would be required, especially considering the Kentucky Education Reform Act mandate. Recommendations include: adoption of the teacher education reform as a top priority in the State; creation of teacher networks; allotment of additional professional development time for teachers; development of a model program under State auspices; establishment of a statewide center for reform; establishment of teacher councils; a roundtable for policy recommendations with public and private input; and review of the Regional Service Centers. (NAV)

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Professional Development

Report from the Prichard Committee
for Academic Excellence
Task Force on Improving Kentucky Schools

October, 1995

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Professional Development
Report from the Task Force on Improving Kentucky Schools

Background

In 1993 and 1994 the Prichard Committee was a party to an external analysis of professional development conducted by the Partnership for Kentucky School Reform. The analysis and recommendations were provided by G. Williamson McDiarmid, co-director of the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning. A steering committee of Kentucky educators reviewed findings and made recommendations; this group was composed of representatives of educational organizations, university faculty, and teachers. Our recommendations on professional development incorporate the findings of this report and subsequent plans to implement these findings. Many of these have been incorporated into a project that has been funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

If school reform is to succeed in Kentucky greatly enhanced professional development is required. These recommendations are, we believe, the way to accomplish this.*

Overview

Education reform establishes new expectations for teachers that many have not been prepared to meet.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act has established demanding new expectations for teachers. Teachers need to learn new ways of teaching to help students achieve the high academic expectations of the learner outcomes at the heart of the reform. Underlying these outcomes is a view of teaching as helping students comprehend the implications of new ideas and information for their existing understandings. Because academic standards are higher and any group of students today is likely to be highly diverse—cognitively, socially, culturally,

*This report is based upon the work of G. Williamson McDiarmid in his report, Realizing New Learning for All Students: A Framework for the Professional Development of Kentucky Teachers. We acknowledge our deep gratitude to Dr. McDiarmid for his words and insights.

ethnically, linguistically—teachers must be very knowledgeable about the subjects they teach.

Without deep and flexible understanding of the content, teachers are handicapped in the critical task of helping diverse students find points of access to the school curriculum. In addition, reform has created new decision-making roles for teachers outside the classroom. Pre-reform teacher education programs did not prepare teachers for these new roles and practices. Teachers must continue to teach and, concurrently, learn what they need to know to help all learners achieve the ambitious learner expectations.

To learn what they need to know and to change their roles and practices, teachers need time and mental space. Time and mental space—the chance to concentrate their thinking on teaching away from the physical and mental demands of the classroom—are in short supply.

Public perceptions of teachers' work exclude professional development.

Although reform has changed expectations for teachers, how the public and policymakers perceive teachers' work has not changed. They continue to think teachers are working only when they are with their students. As a result, there is little support for providing the time and resources teachers require to change their practice. As other issues occupy the policymakers' agenda, support for teachers' professional development may dwindle, as has happened in other states.

Learning to teach in ways to achieve learner expectations is developmental and requires time.

The changes teachers must make to meet the goals of reform entail much more than learning new techniques. They go to the core of what it means to teach. Because these changes are so momentous, most teachers will require considerable time to achieve them.

Learning about the reform goals is but the first step. Teachers must figure out what the goals imply for what they do and what they know. Teachers must gradually blend their customary ways with new approaches to helping students learn. Understanding complex tasks and ideas requires substantial time: to test out new ideas, to assess their effects, to adjust the approach, to assess again, and so on.

New conditions are necessary if teachers are to learn to teach in new ways.

The increased demands of teaching embedded in reform require changes in how teachers work and learn:

- First and foremost, they need *opportunities to work with colleagues*, both in their school building and beyond it. They need chances to learn from one another's successes and failures, to share ideas and knowledge.
- They need *the support and advice of a principal* who understands the demands reform places on teachers and what it takes to change teachers' roles and practice.
- Many teachers also will need someone, other than the principal, *to observe them trying out new practices and provide non-evaluative comments and suggestions.*
- They need to be part of *a larger learning community* that is a source of support and ideas—a community that consists of administrators, students, parents, school councils, school boards, colleagues in higher education, and business people.
- Beyond such support systems, teachers also need *chances to experience learning in ways consistent with reform* and *to observe teaching practices that help all students achieve the learner expectations.*
- Such teaching, in turn, may require them to *develop new understandings of the subjects they teach and the roles they play* in the school, classroom and larger learning community.
- To make progress in the developmental process of learning new practices, *teachers need to feel that they can critically assess their own practice.*
- And, perhaps most vitally, *teachers need time and mental space.* These enable them to become involved in the sometimes protracted process of changing roles and practice.
- To achieve time and mental space, *professional development must be re-defined as a central part of teaching.* It can no longer be add-on activities tacked onto the school day, week or year. It must be woven into teachers' daily work.
- For this to happen, *support for professional development must be sustained and long term.*

What's To Be Done

Unlike many education reforms, the Kentucky Education Reform Act acknowledges the importance of professional development and allocates to schools both a substantial amount of money and considerable decision making power over professional development. In fact, in 1995-96 school-based decision making (SBDM) councils will have control over 65 percent of state aid for staff development budget which is funded at the rate of $23.00 per student. This structure follows the logic of SBDM—that those closest to the students are in the best

position to make decisions that most directly affect the educational program.

Professional development committees—which often include parents—are responsible for determining the needs of their faculty and planning opportunities to address these needs. In addition, SBDM councils have authority over areas of scheduling and teacher assignment, offering the potential to reallocate time in different ways. The legislation also allows districts to increase four mandated professional development days by as many as five additional days if they so choose.

Teachers' opportunities to learn new roles and classroom practices are arguably the linchpin of reform in Kentucky. The ambitious goals for all learners can only be achieved if teachers create opportunities for students to develop their critical capacities and their understandings of fundamental information, ideas, and processes in the gamut of school subjects. Most Kentucky teachers, however, prepared to teach before these new goals were established. Consequently, most are unprepared to help all students achieve the ambitious goals.

Current thinking about professional development policy and practice underscores the importance of ongoing opportunities for teachers to develop deeper knowledge of their subject areas, teaching and learning, and their students. Moreover, it is argued that professional development must reflect the same principles of learning that reforms demand for students—engaging, authentic, and collaborative activities that foster inquiry and debate. The implication is a view of professional development radically different from most current practice, including a continuum from teacher preparation through all career stages, collaborative and inquiry-based learning opportunities inside and outside of the workplace,

and a school culture and structure that provide time and support for ongoing professional learning.

Across Kentucky, pieces of this new conception of teacher learning are occurring. A variety of formal and informal networks offers opportunities for sustained professional learning and debate, including the KERA Fellows, who meet regularly in some districts; PRISM, which pulls together middle school math and science teachers, and the National Alliance for Restructuring Education schools which sponsor a variety of statewide as well as national events for school staff. However, we know little about how teachers actually use these networks, what they learn and bring back to their schools, whether their colleagues are receptive, and how much the networks are valued locally and by the state.

Several influences likely are limiting how teachers view and make choices about professional development: teacher beliefs and past experiences, state reporting procedures, constraints on time, and access to new viewpoints (the supply side of the equation). For example, recent work by Helen Featherstone and her colleagues found that teachers intent on changing their teaching of mathematics along the lines suggested by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards initially thought they needed to learn new pedagogical skills. After examining examples of reformed practice and their own practice, they realized the primary impediment to teaching in more ambitious ways was not a lack of knowledge of practical skills but of genuine understandings of the mathematics they had been teaching. Similarly, one contribution of the teacher center movement of the 1970s was to demonstrate the importance of providing opportunities for teachers to identify their real needs through extensive discussions and occasions to reflect on their practice in the company of other

practitioners.

In short, a comprehensive approach is required. If teachers are to change their beliefs, knowledge, and practices about teaching and of adult learning, all available pressures must push in this direction. These include state policies that communicate images of professional development, that reward certain kinds of opportunities to learn, and that define criteria for licensure and recertification, as well as state and local policies that determine the flexibility and support schools and school councils receive to invent and participate in new forms of teacher learning.

In the years since 1990, professional development has begun to move in some of these directions. Our recommendations are meant to encourage and support more progress toward this comprehensive approach.

Recommendations

I. We recommend *that the Kentucky Department of Education and the General Assembly adopt the professional development of teachers as one of their most important priorities. This priority should be reflected in all decisions, including the organization of and decisions by the Department of Education and allocation of financial resources and time.*

Rationale For the reasons we have expressed, we believe that improving the capacity of teachers to teach all children well is the core challenge for achieving high quality, equitable education in Kentucky. Without this improved capacity the extraordinary academic goals set for Kentucky children and schools will not be achieved.

II. We recommend *that additional time for the professional development of teachers be found by a combination of approaches - funding additional work days by the General Assembly and reorganizing the way time is used at the*

school level by creative planning (as described in the Prichard Committee report on time.)

Rationale There is universal agreement that teachers need time to learn, plan, and interact when they are not teaching children. This resource must be provided. The General Assembly should add a substantial number of days to the teacher work year beginning in the next biennium. In addition, the days already available can be used much more effectively by local schools. For example, typical in-service presentations afford teachers few opportunities to try out new ideas and approaches, to assess the effects of these on their students, and then to revisit the ideas again. Neither do they afford teachers the chance to examine central ideas/information in the subjects they teach.

III. We recommend *the creation of teacher networks to provide teachers with opportunities to learn and to exchange ideas about how best to respond to the new learner outcomes and the new demands on their time.*

Rationale Teachers' networks meet the need for opportunities to discuss with colleagues the meaning of reform for their roles and practice, the need to build a broader supportive community (extending beyond individual schools) among teachers, and the need to build the capacity for professional development tailored to the needs of teachers and specific to Kentucky education.

Throughout the country, teachers have created networks of colleagues. The best known of these is the Writing Project that was started in the San Francisco Bay area in the 1980s and that has spread throughout the country. The Urban Mathematics Collaboratives, another example, were established in 11 cities in the mid-80s. In Kentucky, the Kentucky Education Association, with funding from the Partnership for Kentucky School Reform,

organized the T-squared Project. The program made teachers who identified themselves as experts in particular areas available as consultants to their colleagues. Other inspiring examples of such networks include the Kentucky Writing Project, Foxfire, the Kentucky Economics Education Initiative, and the PRISM Project.

Expanding teacher networks in a number of areas can be valuable to teachers. For instance, a network focused on the new assessments would prove helpful to a large number of teachers trying to understand the implications of these for their practice. Teachers in a given area could be invited to gather to discuss the new assessments and their experiences with them. Teachers could then discuss the best ways to share their concerns, questions, and promising practices as well as identify others—for instance, university faculty--who could be helpful.

Other networks might be subject-matter specific. The Urban Mathematics Collaboratives in Memphis, San Francisco, St. Louis and other cities have created a variety of opportunities for teachers to learn more about mathematics and teaching mathematics: industrial internships, exchange programs with colleges and industries, evening symposia, summer workshops, and so on.

To succeed, supporters must establish the legitimacy of involvement in these networks as a professional development activity on a par with workshops offered by various vendors. The support and involvement of industry and business is critical. In addition, building administrators, school councils, professional development committees, consortia, and the Kentucky Department of Education must be convinced of the legitimacy of such involvement.

IV. We recommend *that the Kentucky Department of Education in cooperation with the Kentucky Education Association develop, in several schools, model professional development plans to be used by professional development committees.*

Rationale Teachers are being asked to design their own staff development, but they are frequently unsure about new roles and practices. As Jane David wrote in her 1993 report to the Prichard Committee, "They don't know what to do." In addition, the conventional view is that professional development consists only of workshops or mini courses because school professional development committees frequently choose from a menu of such courses proposed by vendors rather than create their own plan.

The Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Education Association should collaborate with faculty in colleges and universities and the professional development committees in a small number of schools (with school councils) to design professional development plans. Department staff should meet with teachers from these schools to solicit their ideas about a plan before undertaking the design effort.

The goal will be to document the process of identifying teacher needs and designing a plan to meet these needs. In so doing, the planning group would identify the learning needs of teachers unlikely to be met by the vendors. One purpose would be to identify the questions teachers need to ask themselves in designing their professional development. A second purpose would be to demonstrate various ways that existing opportunities can be organized to meet teachers needs. This exercise also will help identify what other opportunities to learn should be included in these plans if they are to help teachers change their practice and roles.

For instance, teachers, following a workshop, may need to find opportunities to meet

to discuss how the ideas they encountered apply to their classrooms. Or they may want to invite a teacher from another school with expertise in a particular area to help them think about the implications of a vendor's presentation for their practice. Or they may need to schedule visits to one another's classrooms to observe their efforts to change their practice.

The need for such opportunities may, in turn, have implications for restructuring: How do the principal and school council need to rethink and reconfigure the schedule to create the kinds of learning opportunities teachers need?

In developing these plans, the Department should draw on what researchers have been discovering about teacher learning—particularly teacher learning from, for, and about reform—including the need for opportunities to learn:

- that are connected and sustained over time;
- that encourage teachers to examine and rethink their initial ideas, knowledge and practice;
- that address both teacher understanding of the subjects they teach as well as their knowledge of helping diverse students learn the subject;
- that include opportunities for teachers—individually and in the company of colleagues—to reflect on their practice and their efforts to change their practice;
- in which teachers work with colleagues in developing new knowledge and learning new practice;
- in the context in which teachers will use their new knowledge; and
- in the context of particular subject matters.

V. We recommend *a consortium of colleges and universities establish a statewide principals center where principals learn about the new kinds of teaching and learning that underlie high quality education and about how to lead and support teachers in changing their practices and role. The principals center should encourage the creation of regional and local networks, special institutes, academic seminars, discussion groups, and other learning opportunities based on the expressed needs of principals.*

Rationale There is a need for principals to understand and support the goal of all students achieving high academic standards and how to accomplish that goal. These principals must provide leadership in mastering the resources—time, opportunity, and funding—necessary to support changes in teachers' practices.

Principals would attend the center for several weeks during the summer and return periodically during the school year. These visits would afford principals the opportunity to:

- experience—as learners and as teachers—reformed ways of teaching and learning.
- learn more about teacher development, especially the types of experiences likely to lead to the changes in practice implicit in the Kentucky Education Reform Act and the role colleagues, administrators, council, boards, parents, business, universities, and the community can play in such development.
- learn more about how to work with school councils and professional development committees to devise professional development plans that fit their particular needs.
- learn more about the ways in which principals in Kentucky and nationally are responding to the reform movement and the ways—including restructuring the school day and week, drawing on resources in the community, creating opportunities for collaborative work among teachers—principals have devised for supporting teachers in changing their practice and recasting their roles.

- learn more about working with teachers who are at different levels of understanding the reform to devise professional development activities that fit their particular needs.

An additional benefit of participation at the center would be for principals to create their own networks. Just as teacher networks enable teachers to pool what they have learned and inform one another of promising practices, principal networks could serve the same function.

VI. We recommend *the creation, expansion, or strengthening of subject matter councils of teachers to provide collegial leadership and guidance for teachers around subject content. These councils should be organizing in collaboration with institutions of higher learning and should link college and school faculties.*

Rationale Teachers need opportunities to develop understanding of their subject matter at a level rarely experienced before. They can do this through interaction with colleagues in subject matter councils in a variety of ways.

Rather than duplicate the efforts of the various subject matter associations, these councils—one for each subject matter addressed in the curricular frameworks—would build on the current efforts of these associations. Ideally, the subject matter councils would include representatives with strong subject matter interest from elementary and secondary schools—both public and private; the appropriate subject matter associations; the universities, including arts and science as well as teacher education faculty; the Kentucky Department of Education; business, industry and the public who may have expertise in particular areas.

The charge to each of these groups would be to:

- Examine the new curriculum frameworks to determine the knowledge, skills and learning opportunities both elementary and secondary teachers need to

reach the goals in their subject matters set by the reforms. The frameworks tell us what *all* students need to know and understand; they don't tell us what teachers need to know and be able to do to help *all* students learn. Identifying these understandings and skills, and making this assessment available to schools, teachers, parents, policymakers and the public, will be the first task of the councils.

- Identify the long-term professional development needs in their subject matter based on an examination of currently available opportunities.
- Identify existing providers of staff development who can help teachers learn what the council believes they need to know.
- Identify ways in which teachers can be helped to see the connections among the subject matters and how they can help their students see these connections.
- Identify ways that elementary teachers can deepen their subject matter understanding given that they are responsible for all the subject matters.
- Plan and develop with existing organizations opportunities that target teachers and regional resource curriculum and instruction personnel. Such opportunities would help develop the understanding and knowledge of the subject matters, of teaching the subject matter to diverse learners, and of connections among the subject matters called for in the reform.
- Make long-term recommendations to universities on what they need to offer prospective teachers so they can develop the subject matter understandings and knowledge of the connections among subject matters that are necessary if new

teachers are to help all students learn as the reform requires.

- Serve as consultants to the Kentucky Education Association, regional resource centers, districts, individual schools, school councils, and teachers, and others who seek support and advice in organizing teacher development opportunities.
- Identify classrooms in which the kind of learning and teaching called for in the reform is taking place. These classrooms could be videotaped for use on KET and for distribution to teachers, school councils, parents, businesses, and others. Special efforts should be made to identify classrooms in which poor children, those of color, and those with special needs are engaged in more challenging learning.

VII. We recommend *the creation of a Professional Development Roundtable consisting of high-level policymakers, representatives from organizations that provide or broker professional development (consortia, Standards Advisory Council for Professional Development, KDE and its Regional Service Centers, universities, district offices, subject matter associations, Kentucky Education Association, private vendors), practitioners, and representatives of the research community. The Roundtable's purpose would be to translate research evidence into policy recommendations and then inform the broader policy community and the public.*

Rationale Resources across numerous sectors and jurisdictions must be combined and coordinated if professional development is to improve. The creation of such a Roundtable has been included in the Prichard Committee/Partnership proposal to the Pew Charitable Trust.

The Roundtable should also serve the purpose of evaluating teacher and administrator training. At this point, there is no research evaluating what participants actually learn, what changes take place as a result of training, and the overall impact of professional development.

VIII. We recommend *that a careful review of the effectiveness of the Regional Service Centers be undertaken by the Kentucky Institute for Education Research.*

Rationale We have heard contradictory and anecdotal reports about the Regional Service Centers. Research is needed to determine how effectively they are carrying out their mandates. Special attention should be given to the Regional Service Centers' success at instilling professional development as a school district priority, the effectiveness of training provided or brokered, and success in encouraging connections among schools, universities, and colleges.